Kennedy Ordered King Wiretap

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: question of whether y Kennedy, when Attor- General, ordered wide- wiretapping and eaves- ping by the FBI has be- the subject of some con- rsy. It is also very im- nt in gauging Kennedy's fications to be President, whether he is telling the . After all, the credibility has become something of sue these days.

this connection, this col- has learned that, when rney General, Mr. Kenne- ordered a wiretap put on phone of the Rev. Dr. Mar- uther King Jr.

ennedy denies this and r statements that he or- d or condoned the wide- wiretapping or eaves- ping undertaken by the while he commanded the ice Department. He states nowhere in the Justice artment is there to be d a single eavesdrop or- signed by him.

Pierre Salinger, Senator nedy's press representa- , gave the following state- t to Richard Harwood of Washington Post, travel- with the Senator in Ore- : "While he was Attorney neral, Sen. Kennedy never horized any wiretaps ex- t in national security cases at the request of the FBI. He never authorized any bugs at anybody's request."]

However, the facts in the eavesdropping on Dr. King are irrefutable, and we can report them in detail.

Attorney General Kennedy first ordered Dr. King bugged on July 16, 1963. His reason was that Dr. King was in touch with various Communists and was being influenced by them.

The order caused surprise in the FBI. During the 1960 election campaign both Bobby and his brother, the late President, had offered to help Dr. King when he was arrested in Atlanta on Oct. 19 and refused to post bond in connection with a civil rights sit-in.

John F. Kennedy even issued a press release offering to help Dr. King, a gesture which had important effect on the Negro vote three weeks later. In Cook County it was the Negro vote which gave Kennedy his slender 8000-vote margin in Illinois and won him the Presidency.

FBI Objects

When, therefore, the brother of the President ordered a wiretap on Dr. King's phone, the FBI was amazed and opposed it. Courtney Evans, who served as liaison officer between J. Edgar Hoover and Bobby Kennedy, told the Attorney General that Dr. King traveled a lot, so a wiretap might not be too effective. Also he said that the wiretap would have a bad reaction among Negroes if discovered. The Attorney General remarked that he was not in the least interested in repercussions.

He did not press the matter, and so the FBI did not place any taps on Dr. King's wire in July, 1963.

However, in October of that year Bobby Kennedy signed an order for a tap on Dr. King's wires, and thereafter Dr. King's phone conversations were monitored.

This may have been why the highly publicized confrontation between Dr. King and J. Edgar Hoover turned out the way it did.

On Nov. 18, 1964, Hoover called Dr. King "the most notorious liar in the country" after Dr. King had urged civil-rights workers not to report violence to the FBI on the ground that FBI agents were Southerners who would take no action.

Dr. King hurried to Washington for a showdown with Hoover. Emerging from the FBI director's office after their conference, Dr. King made a statement surprisingly favorable to the FBI. He had no criticism for Hoover. Intimates have told us that Dr. King suspected Hoover was tapping his wires. However, King never realized that the person who originally ordered the monitoring was Robert F. Kennedy, the man who had offered to help get King out of jail. Later Kennedy was one of the most headlined mourners at King's funeral.

However, we can report that the FBI faithfully carried on Kennedy's original instructions and submitted regular reports on King's activities—right up until the time of his death. They are considered of some importance now in trying to track down King's assassin.

The wiretaps on King's phone also led to the reporting of King's movements around the country and various persons to whom he talked. These have been checked out for enemies and those who might be interested in assassinating King.

The King wiretap was probably the most sensational of the taps inspired or ordered by Bobby Kennedy when he was Attorney General, but it was by no means the only one. This phase of his government career has been scrutinized only casually in the past. However, the public has a right to know all of his record before voting on his qualifications to be President.

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